

Little Rain in Hampton Roads; Increased Water Conservation on Our Part



Prior to the rain we received in December, the people of Hampton Roads had been experiencing conditions that were unusual, but not unfamiliar. At the end of November, rainfall in the region was 15 inches below normal, but still *less* than the record drought in 1980-81. Mother Nature's nurturing rain clouds were simply passing us by, leaving our area with drought-like conditions.

One would think that it was a good thing that we didn't have to deal with hurricanes last year, but storm activity is one of nature's great contributions to our agriculture and its water supply. In fact, almost 40% of our rainfall for September comes from tropical systems. When the area suffers drought conditions, actions must be taken to conserve water. For example, Portsmouth and Chesapeake adopted water conservation policies in November, and were considering restrictions on water usage due to low reservoir levels and the extended drought conditions. However, with the arrival of a few sprinkles, the restrictions did become mandatory. Although Hampton Roads is finally receiving rainfall, there are still things that we can do to help conserve our precious resource.

INDOORS

- Check for leaks and get them fixed. A slow leak can literally accumulate to several hundred gallons of wasted water in a short amount of time.
- While in the bathroom, turn off the water when brushing your teeth and take shorter showers. A short shower takes about 8 gallons of water while a bath takes about 50-60 gallons. You can also install low-flow, shower heads to reduce the amount of water you use while taking a shower. After all, the bathroom is where we use a large percentage of our daily amount of water.
- Only use the dishwasher and washing machine for full loads. Most washing machines have variable settings depending on the amount of laundry you have to wash. If you have only a small amount of dishes, wash them by hand and use just enough water to do the job.

OUTDOORS

- Water the lawn only when necessary, and be sure to use a pistol-type sprayer. This device enables you to adjust the rate of water flow. It takes about 700 gallons of water to supply 1,000 square feet of lawn with one inch of water.
- Using mulch in the garden reduces water lost through evaporation. This will also reduce the need for regular watering.



- Be sure to only use plants that are adapted to your climate and conditions. A plant that is native to our area will not require as much fertilizer and water to thrive.

Remember, there are 15 cities in Hampton Roads, with a population of over 1 million people. One city alone can't get the job done but our combined efforts can truly make a difference. If we start good habits and are consistent about conserving our water supply now, perhaps there will be less of a need to impose water restrictions should the area experience drought-like conditions in the future.

For more information on water conservation, visit:

- <http://www.awwa.org>
- <http://www.acb-online.org>